The State of the States: 2016 Policy & Political Outlook

Legislators & Experts Join State Innovation Exchange to Discuss the Latest State Policy and Political Trends for 2016

Denver, CO: Today, the State Innovation Exchange (SiX) hosted a “state of the states” press call and released a new memo, assessing the 2016 policy and political outlook for state legislatures throughout the country. Click here to read, State of the States – Key Policy and Political Trends for 2016.

"With an election year upon us, and Washington in perpetual gridlock, very little is likely to emerge from Congress in 2016. As a result, the states have become all the more important, as one of the only places where real policy change is happening that impacts the day to day lives of millions of Americans,” said Nick Rathod, Executive Director of the State Innovation Exchange (SiX). “We anticipate that family economic issues — paid sick days, family leave and equal pay — will move in legislatures across the country, as progressive lawmakers address the economic insecurity still felt by most Americans, despite the economic recovery."

With party control of a chamber closely contested in 2016, Minnesota is an important example of a key battleground state. Said President of the Minnesota Senate Sandy Pappas, “Minnesota has been fortunate that under unified democratic control, we raised the minimum wage and passed the Women's Economic Security Act, but there is more work to be done and now with a split legislature, our task is more difficult. We are determined, however, to press ahead with paid family leave and earned sick pay. Our education agenda for working families includes universal pre-school and free community college. All our children need strong preparation for school and our college students are carrying too much of a debt load. Our families deserve a government that works for ordinary Minnesotans.”

Added Iowa State Senate Majority Whip Joe Bolckom, “In Iowa, Senate Democrats face the challenge of a Republican Governor and a Republican-controlled House. Given this environment, I am hopeful that Iowa Democrats will work to spark a statewide debate on such ‘families first’ initiatives as expanded access to child care and preschool, new protections for victims of domestic violence, expanding Iowa’s Earned Income Tax Credit, increasing the state’s minimum wage, protecting workers from wage theft, and ensuring access to paid sick leave for more workers. In addition, we must invest strategically in education and job training, as well as passing policies that are designed to help more Iowa families join the middle class.”

In a presidential election year, much is at stake for the makeup of state legislatures and races down the ballot. As David Winkler, Vice President and Director of Research at Project New America, explained, “Progressive state legislators are focused on common-sense solutions that are broadly popular with
voters across the board. For example, building a growing economy that works for all, not just the wealthy, has become a core platform for progressives. That platform includes pro-growth policies that promote healthy families such as, equal pay for women, raising wages, and investing in education, several of which we expect to advance in state legislatures around the country. We know that not all of these popular policies will pass in every state in 2016, but GOP legislators oppose them at their peril.”

RESOURCES:

2. Listen to a recording of today’s call, here.